

The Sky Hoboes

Some Adventures of Two Pioneer
Commercial Airmen

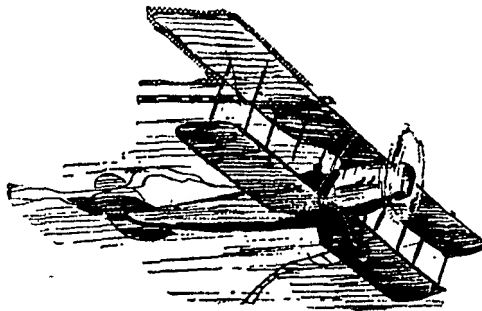
By HARRY FITZSIMMONS



THESE FEW MEMOIRS

Are humbly and respectfully dedicated to my former friends and comrades of the 52nd Squadron, Royal Flying Corps, France, who made "The Great Adventure" on July 30th, 1918, and who now sleep "Somewhere in France."

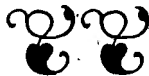
"Per Ardua Ad Astra"



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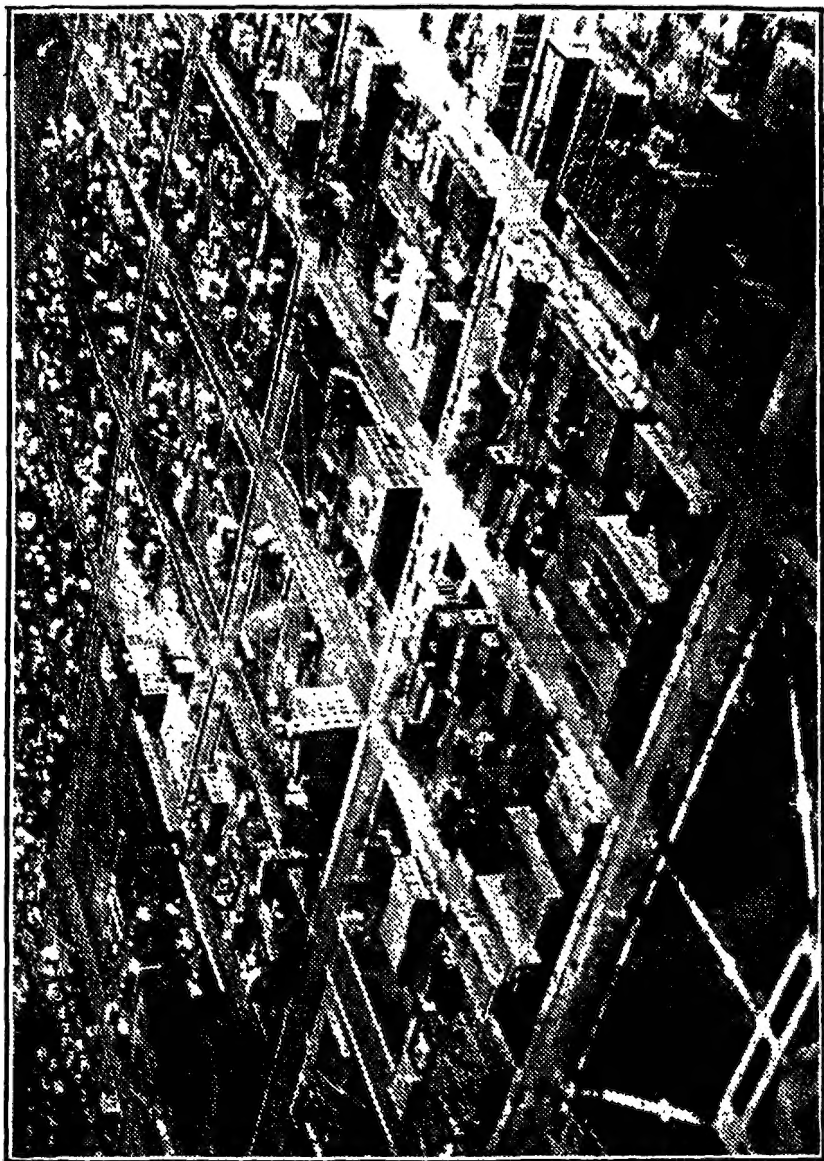
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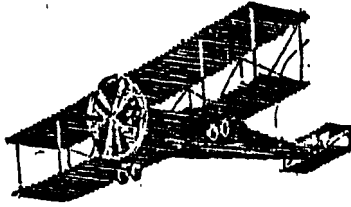
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The City of Lethbridge Business District. Galt Gardens in Foreground.



THE SKY HOBOES

FOREWORD

In April, 1920, in company with my flying partner and friend, Jock Palmer, we organized and launched the Lethbridge Aircraft Co., Ltd., and a few weeks later brought the first locally owned airplane to Lethbridge, from which point we have been operating ever since, and have flown all over the populated part of Alberta, landing at hundreds of towns and cities, giving stunting exhibitions and carrying passengers for the past three years.

In 1920 our record of flying was 22,000 miles, in 1921 approximately 30,000 miles; in all 52,000 miles, or a total distance equal to almost twice around the world.

Our pioneer efforts in commercial aviation are now a matter of flying history, and during the past three years we have managed to crowd an experience of a life-time, second only to that acquired in the European War.

Some of our operations have been in a very difficult locality, and one which has been shunned by most commercial aviators for the reason that the Rocky Mountains and foothills are not exactly what airmen would pick by choice to carry passengers or give flying exhibitions over, as in the event of engine failures no suitable landing grounds are available, and the fact that we have successfully worked in and over the mountains many times speaks volumes for the care that has been expended on the maintenance and upkeep of our plane and engine.

We have been accused by our enemies, of whom we have many (what men in any line of business haven't?) of everything in the line of recklessness, and by our friends, of whom we have legion, scattered all over the country, of being careful and painstaking, due to the great confidence in one another's ability, of our mechanical, technical and practical training in the hard school of experience. This based on complete co-operation and real friendship for one another has resulted in the success we have attained during the past few years.

I assure you that even in this matter of fact old age that there are many adventures to be had if one will seek them, and I further assure you that each story related herein is a true and actual occurrence taken from a fund of such.

Whether you agree with our friends or not you will have to admit that we have brought entertainment, instruction and enlightenment on aviation to many thousands of our citizens, who reside more or less on

the outskirts of the world's progress, as far as aviation is concerned, and many of whom never had an opportunity of seeing an aeroplane in action until we delivered it practically at their back doors.

We have carried hundreds of passengers safely, swiftly and comfortably and without one exception that I know of, all are enthusiastic converts to this latest and best mode of modern transportation.

Our passengers are comprised from all over the province of Alberta, of lawyers, doctors and professional men of all classes, ladies and children of all ages, miners, farmers, railway men, prospectors, in fact men from all classes of life in Alberta have enjoyed the experience of a flight in our machine.

The only person we ever heard exclaim that the novelty of an airplane had worn off was the fellow who had never been up. How can the novelty of anything wear off when one has never experienced it?

It is true that the novelty of a stunting airplane has considerably worn off and none realize this better than we do, this in fact we knew, absolutely, long before we started flying in this country, and none are more pleased to see it so, for the very good reason that the commercial airplane has no use or time for stunting, but in the pioneer days it was highly essential and served its purpose in introducing the plane to the people and educating them to the possibilities, strains and stresses that an airplane could stand, thus planting the germ in their minds that the modern straight flying, passenger carrying airplane in the hands of efficient, competent and trained men, could more than favorably compare with any other form of transportation in existence today for actual safety.

This statement we can easily prove not from our figures, but by ones that have been carefully compiled by the Intelligence Branch of the Canadian Air Board and which are easily available to any one sufficiently interested to request them.

The fact that we are still flying today and anxious to stay in the business is because from our great experience of war and peace time flying we know and have known for years of the great future of aviation and believe that if we can grow with the development of it that we will eventually reap the reward of our faith, not only financially, but the point that appeals to all men who launch new enterprises, of actual, successful accomplishments of an idea, half the fun to men with vision is in overcoming obstacles, hardships and discouragement—the final accomplishment of seeing Canada in years to come carrying about the greatest part of its commercial transportation of mails, goods and passengers via a net work of air lines. Toward this goal we are humbly striving along with a number of our comrades throughout the North American continent who have the same faith and belief in the great future of transportation by air, that we have, and have had for years.

Whether we succeed or fail, we will have the great satisfaction of knowing that we tried, and in spite of many hardships, we can really say that now we are commencing to see many results of our pioneer efforts and those of our business associates.

SOME INTERESTING AND AMUSING PASSENGERS AND SPECTATORS

During the past two years we have carried some hundreds of passengers safely, quickly and comfortably, and we have never known of a single instance where a passenger has not left our machine as an enthusiastic booster for Aviation.

Two of our lady passengers in particular, stated it was a decided pleasure to have flown.

The first lady to fly in our plane was the wife of a local business man.

While the plane was being set up and rigged for its first flight she used to come and watch the progress of it and enquire how long before it would be ready. Finally the day came, after testing out the machine on its first flight, and she went up. She was one of our best boosters after that, and continually came out to the Drome in her car with spectators and passengers. Her interest in the plane never seemed to abate and many times I have found her showing people how the plane was operated, pointing out the various controls and explaining everything in general and the best part of it was she had evidently given much thought and study to the subject as we found out by listening to her explanations to her friends that she was pretty well posted.

Another lady, whom we were delighted to carry, was the wife of a prominent automobile manufacturer in Eastern Canada. She and her husband were out here on a trip with a party of Eastern business people, and one of their local friends drove them out to the Airdrome. She immediately decided that she would like to go up, and did so. When the machine landed after the flight she was pounding the side of the cockpit with her fist and stamping on the floor with her feet. She was actually hysterical with joy. She explained that though she had lived all during the war years in a town where thousands of aviators were trained, and that dozens of planes were over her house daily, she had never thought of flying herself until the opportunity happened to present itself this night. She stated that from now on she would fly every opportunity she got. She very reluctantly got out of the machine and went away with her friends, after very kindly extending to Palmer and myself an invitation to call upon them in Toronto, should we ever come there, and which we hope to do this year when we expect to fly to Ottawa.

We have had many a good laugh out of the remarks made by some spectators at various points where we have landed.

When we first started flying here, a certain well known local Jewish gentleman used to come out day after day and walk round and round the plane, emitting a heart-rending groan, apparently of astonishment (if one can groan with astonishment), every few moments. This kept up for a week and I decided that possibly the man wished to go up, but was a little uneasy.

I finally went up to him and asked him if he would like to make a flight. He backed away in terror at the idea and answered "No! No! Of course not!" I said, "We have noticed that you were very much interested in the machine and thought possibly you wished to fly." "No," he replied, "I have been vatching you flying every day and for the live of me I can't figure oud vat makes the vings flop."

At another time a certain lady, (whom we afterwards found out was a school teacher), asked us the most amazing questions and kept us busy answering her, so much so that she would not allow us time really to get our passengers aboard and out, and finally, as I was getting extremely fed up I referred her and her questions to my partner. He asked her if she would not like to go up, and she got quite indignant at the suggestion, as she considered that it was not the least bit dignified for one of



Airgraph of Henderson Lake, Lethbridge.

her standing in the community to engage in flying, but confided that she wished her pupils to write an essay on the airplane the next day and wished to get all information possible. She then turned to me and said, "Young man, what happens to you if your engine stops when you are up there?" I gasped feebly and pointed to Palmer who was equal to the occasion and answered her with this old war chestnut which I had not heard for years. "Madam," he said, "that is really one of the terrible features of aviation. Many and many a poor fellow has had that occur and being unable to get back to earth, he simply flies round and round until he starves to death." I slid down under the wind shield in the cockpit and howled, not so much at the story as the serious look on Palmer's face, and it apparently took the wind right out from under the wings of the old girl, who gave both of us one nasty look and staggered away.

At another town where the field was very rough, we figured out a scheme in case of a broken undercarriage to prevent the wheels from coming through the bottom wing, and later on made a guard from one end of the axle to the other with shock absorbers. This was afterwards commented on favorably by an examining officer of the Air Board who thought it was a good idea. Upon the day we devised the scheme we did not have any shock absorber with us, but I picked up a bale of wire and spliced it together and put it on. It answered the purpose but, of course, did not look very neat.

During a lull in the passenger service hundreds came around to examine the machine, and finally an argument broke out amongst some former soldiers as to the name and type of the plane.

One stated that it was a scout, another that it resembled a certain make of Hun machine that he had often seen, and so on. One old farmer who was a later arrival elbowed his way into the crowd, looked over the plane for a moment, listened to the debate and then pointed to the wire and said, "Why, man, it's a damn Ford, look at the hay wire."

An old friend of mine who has a large flock of pigeons on the outskirts, told me that every time the plane came around his house that his pigeons used to get very excited, and many times after this, when alone and testing out the machine on rigging tests, I used to dive on his pigeon loft for the pure fun of watching them scatter away in all directions. They evidently thought it a new species of hawk. Every time I met the owner in the street, he would jokingly remark that if I did not quit scaring his pigeons that I would "bust" into jail.

A short time after this while flying low in the vicinity of the jail, the engine started to miss and I immediately shut her off and started to land. I was going straight for the jail yard, and the thought flashed across my mind that many a true word is said in a joke, "Here is where I sure 'bust' into jail." I was so low that I felt that I would not be able to make the outside field, but I pulled the throttle open again, she hit on all eight, and I was able to get around O.K. and make the Airdrome for landing and found the reason for the miss. I never bothered my friend's pigeons any more.

Speaking of birds reminds me of some experiences we have had with them.

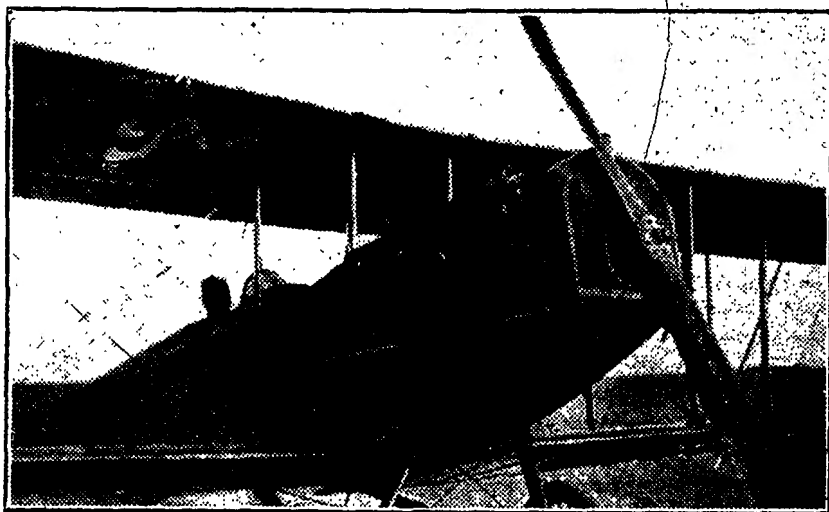
One day when leaving for Magrath, Alberta, a large sparrow hawk joined us and flew along with us, a distance of over thirty miles, until we went down for our landing. He appeared greatly interested in the plane and remained within fifty feet of us all the time. Everytime we would turn towards him he would also turn and keep the same distance away. If we turned the opposite way he followed us. As long as we flew straight he did likewise, and appeared to take no notice of us.

For the benefit of the people who figure out the heights that different species of birds fly at, we have often met lone sparrows at 2,000 feet and other birds much higher.

A sparrow was responsible for a forced landing of ours at Raymond, Alberta. As the machine was taking off, and about twenty feet from the ground the bird flew directly into the propellor and shattered it, causing the machine to make a landing in a wheat field. The wheat was so long that it wrapped around the axle thus preventing her from running on the ground until she had overcome her landing momentum and turned the plane over on her nose, as we could not get her out of the field again we dismantled the wings and towed her into Lethbridge. I have the remains of the propellor yet, and showed it at the fair at Lethbridge last year where we had a picture exhibit. We have no record of what happened to the bird.

Five minutes after we had left Lethbridge on the flight, the Police were endeavoring to locate us at Lethbridge, to go up the Crow's Nest Pass in pursuit of Bassoff and his gang of train robbers, who had held up a train that afternoon at Sentinel near the British Columbia line. Some days after this in a gun fight at Bellevue, Alberta, two policemen and one bandit were killed, and Bassoff was eventually captured and hung.

Many times have we dove on lakes and scared up hundreds of ducks, and one time at Eighteen Mile lake, near Stirling, Alberta, we were surrounded by thousands of them and had to get away ourselves with the plane for fear of them getting into our propellor and sending us down. Mr. Loder, a merchant of Stirling, will vouch for this as he was a passenger once with Palmer and had the same experience. He wanted to go back home and get his heavy artillery and fight it out with the ducks for the supremacy of the air, at that point, but it was not done as it is against the game laws.



Fitzsimmons and Plane, 1920, After Completing 22,000 Miles of Flying.

THE BULL FIGHT

One of the funniest experiences of our adventures was at Raymond Fair in 1920. The machine was sitting in the field in the centre of the race track, almost opposite the Grand Stand, which was crowded with people. The attraction on at that time was steer riding and bull dogging. Many of our famous cow punchers, ropers and riders were there, and taking part amongst whom was the well known cattleman and rancher, Ray Knight.

One of the steers had been ridden and spurred until he was half crazy, and after getting rid of his rider, instead of going into the corral at the end of the track, he broke through into the field where our machine, Palmer and myself, and three or four spectators, were examining the plane were. Mr. Steer immediately lowered his head and chose me to pace him for a marathon, around and around the plane we went, the rest of the party joining in. I was afraid that the cow's husband might try to take a short cut and jump over or through the plane, which would have wrecked it completely. I shouted to the others to run for the fence and started for there myself, and finally got up onto the top rail of the corral and paused for breath. On looking around I observed my partner, Palmer, taking long leaps toward me and the bull after him. Palmer had his flying helmet on, and the chin strap was undone, the helmet was flapping on both sides of his ears and he resembled nothing else than a Holstein fleeing from her irate husband. He was straining every nerve to reach the fence first, and finally did so by a small margin. On scrambling up beside me he gasped out, "How is that for speed? Did I run him to death?" The crowd in the grand stand rooted and cheered the whole performance, and many of our acquaintances from Lethbridge who were present, stated it was the best thing on the programme.

Being disappointed at losing Palmer the bull returned to the plane and attempted to wreck his vengeance on it. He did succeed in ruining one elevator and then departed to the far end of the field. We made temporary repairs and flew to Lethbridge where we put on a new elevator. Needless to say we have never returned to Raymond, as after surviving on three different occasions, a terrible wind storm, an argument with a sparrow, and playing matador to a crazy bull, we felt that it was not wise to tempt fate too far.

Palmer confided to me some weeks afterwards that he had broken a world's record for running, but that he supposed it would never be known, as he felt certain that if he had been timed with a stop watch it would have proven that he had done the last hundred yards in nothing flat.



THE WIND STORM

On one of our first flights away from the home aerodrome we went to Raymond, Alberta. Here we ran into a terrific windstorm which we fought for two days in an open field outside of the town. Every resident of the Prairies knows these gentle zephyrs that we get quite frequently, and I can assure you that those two days and nights stand out very vividly in my memory.

At times the wind had a velocity of eighty miles an hour and as every dollar Palmer and I had in the world was tied up in our machine, also the money of many of our acquaintances and friends, you can imagine our anxiety. At one time we had seven wire cables taken from a fence nearby over the engine and fuselage and tied to stakes in the ground, the wheels and wings being secured as well. During a temporary lull of the wind I ran to a farm house nearby to secure more stakes and when about one hundred yards away from the machine on my return I observed Palmer laying on his face on one of the wings and trying frantically to maintain himself and the plane on the ground. Old Maud was trying her hardest to fly without engine power and if our stakes had given out all together our enterprise would have died in infancy; as it was she was off the ground fully a foot at every gust and my partner was all in. As quickly as possible I drove in fresh stakes and we eventually got the plane more secure. We slept with the machine for two nights and only relieved each other during the days to go for food.

This was a valuable lesson to us and at all future times when we had occasion, as we did hundreds of times since, to leave the plane in fields over night, we took advantage of all possible shelter, dips in the ground, straw stacks, shrubbery or anything that would serve as a wind break, though many times we have had to sleep in fields where stock was, to keep them from rubbing and scratching on the plane and thereby damaging it.

On the second morning the wind dropped and we took off at daylight, cut across country en-route for Sweet Grass where we had a flying contract, and came out on the Coutts branch of the C.P.R. at Warner, Alberta. We flew over the still sleeping town and around it several times and finally landed in a field about a mile out for gas and breakfast. The noise of the engine had apparently awakened the town and from the time we landed, the road became a constant stream of traffic. Bare-footed boys running, men on horseback, automobiles, women pushing baby carriages and in fact every form of conveyance was utilized to get out to see the first airplane that ever landed at Warner. We arranged with a couple of men to guard the plane, while we went to the hotel for a much-needed breakfast and wash, and after getting gas and oil, took off upon our flight to Sweet Grass, Montana, much relieved to have successfully defeated a typical Southern Alberta breeze which tried mighty hard to destroy our plane.

This was our first experience with these gales, as neither of us had ever flown in Canada before acquiring our machine, all our flying having been done in England and France, where the air is altogether different and the altitude on the ground is sea level or almost so. In this country we are 3,000 feet above sea level, and this makes considerable difference in the efficiency of a plane and in the actual flying of it as the atmospheric conditions are altogether different; the air, in other words, being so thin or rare, and consequently more bumpy or what ground people call full of air pockets. Since then we have flown scores of times under all sorts of weather conditions and a number of times in gales blowing fifty miles an hour. We have learned in the hard school of experience that a machine in the air in a gale is in its natural element and under complete control, but on the ground it is much like a ship out of water and on account of a plane's great wing surface they can be blown over and destroyed, unless great precaution is taken in securing them while on the ground.

Many times since we have taken advantage of heavy gales which were favorable to us when making long flights, and on different journeys have made a speed of one hundred and twenty miles per hour in a Curtiss plane. The great advantage of a fair wind, of course, is the saving of expense in the consumption of oil and gas, as the natural speed of a plane of that mentioned type averages almost seventy miles an hour, and a fifty-mile an hour wind therefore helps out the pocketbook considerably; very much so, when one has to rustle the money for said gas as the commercial airman have not the advantage of their more fortunate brothers now in the service of the Government, where everything is provided, from an airplane and its equipment to the proper temperature of his daily (or weekly), tub.

Quite often have we been compelled to combat a head wind, owing to the fulfillment of flying contracts or other important times. We never do it though from choice as a heavy head wind in a small-powered plane is an expensive proposition and the machine is retarded in its speed, according to the velocity of the wind.

On one occasion over Henderson Lake at Lethbridge we were starting to fulfill a contract in the mountains one hundred miles west of Lethbridge. After climbing to a height of 6,000 feet and directly over the lake we flew steadily for fifteen minutes and never moved over a mile forward. We eventually climbed to seven thousand five hundred, and got entirely out of the wind and went away at our usual speed. We have never yet been able to completely figure out the prairie winds. Sometimes on the ground it is quite calm and a few hundred feet up it is blowing a gale, at other times there may be a small hurricane on the ground and at one thousand feet not a breath of wind. At others the higher you go the worse it gets, and so on, so flying in Alberta and particularly in the vicinity of the Rocky Mountains is generally full of surprises as to what kind of conditions we are to have next. Certainly if we don't get much money in this country we get lots of weather.

As an illustration, on one of our flights up the Crow's Nest Pass, there is a mountain called Turtle, at Frank, Alberta.* This mountain is almost at right angles to the valley through which the railroad runs. I have known on the ground many times that when a east wind was blowing at Frank, a west one was blowing at Blairmore, or vice versa, only a mile away, and the change was always noticeable at a small bridge about half way between the two towns and opposite the point of the base of the above mentioned mountain.

On the day of our flight when directly over this point at an altitude of twenty-eight hundred feet we were flying along serenely with a light wind of a few miles an hour from the west opposing us. All of a sudden the bottom appeared to drop out of the whole universe and we fell almost one hundred feet straight down. The surprise was so great to both Palmer and myself that we thought one of the wings had given away. We could not associate it for an instant as a bump or an air pocket. I can only account for this as flying into a great vacuum caused by the vortex or whirlpool of the east and west winds combatting each other, and caused by the peculiar position of the mountain to the valley.

The local residents of the two Pass towns I have mentioned will recognize the spot where this fight actually occurs on the ground. I can vouch for the fact that the same thing occurs in the air, with the exception that the whole world seems to fall out from underneath you when passing over that spot in a plane.

I recently read an article on mountain flying by an aviator, who stated that there was no difference between mountain and prairie flying. Upon inquiry I found that he was flying a 375 horse-power Rolls-Royce, and was able to get thousands of feet above the highest peaks. Compare this with our engine of 90 horse-power. Consequently for real flying experience under all conditions, one must seek information from the commercial man, not the military or civil service aviator, as their work cannot be compared to ours for real training.



WING ACROBATICS

Ormer L. Locklear, who was killed accidentally (not stunting), was the originator in the United States of the feats of wing walking, changing planes in mid-air, and other aerobatics on the wings of a plane in flight. I claim to have been the first Canadian airman who ever did these feats successfully and for the first time tell how they came to be included in our airplane stunting programme, the reason for them and why we discontinued them. We have given a great many of these exhibitions all over this country, and with the exception of when we were first training for them, I have never given an exhibition of this kind that I was not well paid for, and contrary to the belief that I used to walk the wings of an aeroplane when annoyed or in need of exercise.

On three occasions in France I recollect where these feats were used successfully in life saving by different airmen. Once when part of the wing was shot off, an observer climbed out on the opposite wing and succeeded in keeping the plane in balance until he and his partner were able to get down on the ground. They broke the plane of course, but saved their lives.

At another time, a machine was on fire and both Pilot and Observer climbed out on a wing and landed safely. At another time, in the early days of war flying, an Observer got out on the plane with a rifle and shot down a Hun machine which could not be reached with his gun owing to the Hun being on the blind side of the plane, and consequently out of sight.

Palmer and I used to have many discussions on these feats, and when I was in California lecturing on war flying shortly after I returned from overseas, I saw Locklear performing some of his feats, and it struck me that in days to come there would be such a thing as a service airplane, that is one with oil and gas which would be in the air to supply through machines which did not wish to stop and lose time, with the required fuel and oil. They would be in the vicinity of their own airdromes and on the transcontinental airlines. Upon signal a hose would be dropped, the necessary gas and oil pumped in, the money for some sent down, mail transferred and exchanged, and so on. And why not? Locomotives take water on the fly on American and European railroads. Passengers and pilots are taken in large liners from tugs and other vessels without stopping, mail exchanged on the fly with passing trains and other feats performed in every day life, that in the early days looked like flirting with the undertaker.

The reason I came to start these feats was, that we were late in the spring of 1920 getting in the field and I found that most of my competitors in the flying game were bidding for fair contracts, and as a new comer I had to devise a scheme to beat them to it in order to keep my company in operation. Palmer and I then started to train at this quietly. One of our favorite places was over Henderson Lake when few people were around. We practised the top and bottom plane work first, devised

a set of signals and as we were both practical airmen we knew the effect of strain and balance on the wings and how to work together and counteract them. The undercarriage work we agreed upon as follows: After I disappeared from sight underneath the plane, he was to give me one minute and a half and if at the end of that time I did not re-appear he would figure that I was exhausted or otherwise unable to get back up. He was then to come down as close to the lake as possible, pull the machine up to almost, but not quite a stall, so that he would not endanger himself to a spin at low altitude. This would allow me to drop in the lake and the chances were that I would come out unharmed. Now that was the plan, if we had to use it, which we never did. As I have always been something of an athlete, the balancing and climbing came quite easily to me. Without proper training I would never attempt those feats with anyone except Palmer, as our co-operation, signals and confidence in one another are as near perfect as possible.

We always carried out our performance at sufficient height that in the event of trouble, due to engine failure, I would have plenty of time to come in and the machine could be got under complete control. On only two occasions did I ever have to come in quickly; once from the top plane owing to a broken spark plug and once from the extreme end of the bottom wing on account of magneto trouble. There was absolutely no danger to either of us, for the reason that we had made proper provision for these occurrences by having plenty of height.

Naturally I received much criticism for these feats from many people who did not realize the reason for them, but as they continued to bring home the bacon in the line of fair contracts, many of them from the territory where our competitors were working, we did not worry about what other people thought, particularly the knocking ones, who we were informed were much disappointed at our continued success.

Now, then, permit me to take your mind back to the first automobile, when every circus had one as an interesting exhibit. For instance, Do you remember the time when the automobile used to loop the loop with a lady trainer and a lion in the front seat, starting from the centre pole of the big top down to the ground? Certainly you do, and so does everyone else who ever went to a circus twenty-five years ago. What would you think of a man who would loop the loop in an auto today? What, and so would I.

Do you remember the stunting bicycle, looping the loop, leaping the gap, etc.? Certainly you do. What was the reason for it? Advertising. By that means the use of the auto and bicycle were driven into everyone's mind very quickly, and many early firms used to supply the cars and bicycles for these stunts, and that's the very reason that I also used those Locklear feats as they were called, to keep my company in business, and I leave it to you as to whether I have succeeded or not. I don't mind admitting to you that when we first introduced these stunts the Canadian Air Board had not a fire patrol over the mountains then; and the past two years of crop failures were not in sight, and if times had been

normal we expected that our company would have had a more legitimate source of revenue, which would have sooner enabled us to re-organize and develop it, but when we had only the fairs and public gatherings to look forward to for revenue we had to consequently carry on with our stunting exhibitions until the time arrived when they had served their purpose and we voluntarily discontinued them. During that time two people were killed in Western Canada, endeavoring to imitate our feats, and we deny all responsibility for those fatalities as they should not have been permitted except by practical airmen who had taken every precaution and training before ever going before the public to attempt them.

I do not want to intimate for a minute that we are perfect in our profession, but while we are on the topic of accidents I simply want to convey to you the fact that airplanes are made to fly and they will fly with absolute safety if everybody in connection with their operation and maintenance do their part—proper inspection, care, efficient and trained men to handle them. If men had quit flying because of accidents or seamen had given up the sea, railroad men the railroad, we would be back in the dark ages of transportation. Mrs. Reggie McNooter would be on the starboard side of a mule instead of behind the wheel of her limousine.

I believe that there has been a man killed for every mile of railway track on the American continent, and the ocean and the lake-going vessels have taken their toll. Let your mind go back to the Titanic and Empress of Ireland disasters, and many others. The racing automobile which is, and was highly necessary, and which is responsible for your beautifully finished family car of today, and for that reason also, the Locklear feats on an airplane, have served a very useful purpose if for no other reason than your criticism, which all helped to advertise the airplane and flying. The prospective passenger lost a lot of their uneasiness, when they witnessed these feats on the stunting airplane.

The first place we gave one of these exhibitions was at Conrad, Montana, and from there practically all over the Province of Alberta. In June, 1920, I received a wire from Locklear asking us to rent him our plane for his Calgary and Edmonton engagements. This I agreed to do and so advised him. I have his wire of thanks to me yet in my scrap book, but shortly after this as the result of our own flights, contracts came in very fast, and when Locklear's manager came to interview us about the plane, we were appearing at an exhibition some distance away. He got on the train, came and saw our show, then we asked to be excused of our contract for the use of the plane, and he agreed. He then offered me a contract on behalf of Palmer and myself, and another aviator north of us to go to England to do the change of plane act, and again a few weeks after Locklear's death, I had the chance to go to California and finish an uncompleted picture. We turned both of these offers down, which would have made us much money, for the reason that I believed, and still believe, that by sticking to Commercial Aviation in this country we will yet come out on top, just as soon as we can raise the necessary capital to put our plans into effect, and which are only in abeyance, due

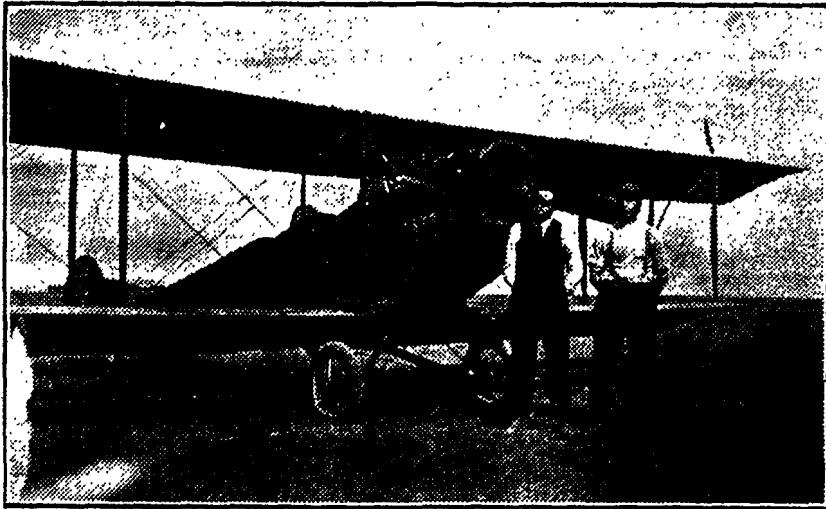
to general hard times all over the country. The time is now opportune for its further development and the preliminary work done by us and other small companies have been very necessary and essential in the development of Aviation in this country.

A man told me recently that he did not believe that airplane travel would ever be safe. To disprove this I have gone to considerable trouble to get the results of the investigations on almost every big accident that has happened in recent years. Captain Alcock, who flew the Atlantic, and Harry Hawker, died in the air of natural causes. The R-38 and the Roma airship disasters and the recent head-on collision of two London-Paris commercial planes, are all explainable and avoidable, and are no fault of the airplane or engine. These accidents will all be explained in due course, but we have all heard of the accidents. How many of you have heard of the thousands of men in this service who are flying daily with one hundred per cent. efficiency. Eddie Stinson, the brother of Katherine Stinson, has carried 8,000 people and never had an accident, and has been flying for years. He is one of the real pioneers of the days of Beachy, Eli, Curtiss, Grahame White and other old timers. A concern on the Pacific coast has flown for two years with the Oriental mails from Seattle to Vancouver and have never missed a flight through weather or other reasons.

One of the large companies on the London-Amsterdam route have flown over a year and never missed a trip or had an accident, and I could go on and name hundreds of others. Our own record of 52,000 miles, is something to be proud of, and never an accident to a passenger of hundreds carried. The only back-slider the Aviators Union have had is Ruth Law, the aviatrix, well known all over the North American continent. Ruth very foolishly, we think, allowed some man to put the butterfly net over her and has exchanged the joys of navigating a beautiful smooth running airplane for the joys of married life. We believe that Ruth will rue the day and in time to come would gladly exchange her battle with measles, mumps, scarlet fever, croup, etc., for the most cantankerous mis-firing unsafe old air bus in existence. We could excuse her for this last step of hers, believing that she may possibly have met Nellie McClung or some of her disciples who have converted her into the belief that woman's proper sphere is the home and not in a plunging, snorting airplane, but we will never forgive her for the remark she made about commercial aviation never becoming popular because of its danger. This looks to us that Ruth had already realized that she had made one big mistake, and was attempting to blame it on to the airplane as many others have done. For this remark we suggest that the Joy Flyers Union should either "can" her outright or hold back her withdrawal card until she explains. We yet hope to see Ruth return to the fold. Perhaps we could arrange to have some fellow take her fiance up and loop him a couple of times without strapping him in.

But honestly here are the figures compiled by the Intelligence branch of the Canadian Airboard for the past year, 1921: Total miles flown in

Canada (only), more than a quarter of a million, 292,000 some odd to be exact. (Only eighty-two thousand of this amount by the Forest Patrol machines.) So that the Commercial Companies have done the bulk of the flying. Twenty-three thousand and nineteen passengers carried, and the total flying accidents were 218. There is no comparison with the automobile for the same number of machines in service, miles flown and people handled. We, therefore, believe when the great Canadian public realize these facts that the day of the airplane will arrive, and warrant the efforts undergone by a few far-seeing men. It has arrived in other countries. Why are we Canadians so slow to adopt new things of all kinds? Boast of our progressiveness, and finally fall into line years after every one else.



Lethbridge Airplane, Holding World's Endurance Record of 52,000 Miles of Flying, Piloted by Palmer and Fitzsimmons.

A FEW BREAKDOWNS AND SOME ANNOYING ACCIDENTS

Break-downs or crashes, as they are called in the flying game, are not always serious and many breakdowns and small accidents are at times quite humorous. They are quite often caused in commercial flying by operating on bad or rough fields which prevent perfect landings, no matter how great the skill of the pilot, as airplanes require perfectly level fields free from obstruction to take off and land on efficiently.

During the pioneer work of airplanes it is not always possible to get proper fields and so one has to make the best of such as there are.

In the year 1920, while flying at New Dayton, the machine made a perfect landing, but before it stopped its momentum, the plane went through a large cattle wallow which gave it a terrific wrench and broke off two of the undercarriage struts driving them through the bottom pan under the engine. The metal fittings were broken off completely, and before we could leave there they had to be repaired.

I made arrangements with the local blacksmith, who told me he had repaired everything in his life except an airplane, and now he had a chance to try his hand on one of those. We made two new struts out of two by fours, cut them down, and also the necessary fittings which were very heavy and crude, but answered the purpose fine. When we got the plane fixed up she looked something like a race horse with rubber boots on, but we got away finally and flew home to Lethbridge where we took the temporary repairs off and put on a complete new undercarriage which made the plane look more human, but had any of our flying friends seen us coming home they would have had quite a laugh at the appearance of the old bus.

The blacksmith was quite pleased with his job, and so were we for that matter, as we were enabled to get home without the expense and delay of shipping down the necessary spares and putting them on.

On another occasion we were about a hundred miles away giving a flying exhibition, and we were forced to stay over night. We tied the machine down for the night and tried to secure a room at the hotel, but all were occupied, so we eventually got one at a Chinese rooming house, and after finding the room we examined the bed, which was far from inviting. Owing to the shortage of linen we went downstairs and complained to the Chinaman in charge, who appeared very wrathful, and informed us that over one hundred men had slept in that bed, and we were the first to complain of the condition of the sheets. We passed a few complimentary remarks with the Son of Confucius and went back to the plane, where we found about twenty cows trying to use the rudder and the corners of the wings as a scratching post. We chased them away and slept on the ground under one of the wings. In the morning we examined the plane and found that the rudder was punctured in several places by the horns of the cattle. As we were without the necessary

"dope" patches, etc., to repair the damage we had to again call on our ingenuity, and we purchased a needle, linen thread and a supply of adhesive sticking plaster, and with these we made temporary repairs to the rudder which enabled us to get home. Needless to say we kept close eye on our first aid patches on the rudder, but they were apparently as strong when we landed at Lethbridge as when we put them on.

On another flight sometime later we went to Waterton Lakes in the heart of the mountains, which is a very beautiful summer resort, and a popular place for tourists from all over the country. There is no railroad connection with this place, and it can only be reached by auto road or air. We gave a flying exhibition and were kept very busy carrying passengers all the next day. The view from a plane of the lakes and through the mountain peaks was one of the finest, and each passenger was highly delighted with the trip.

I had my flying helmet which I wore in France during the war, and it was very valuable to me as a souvenir, for the reason that a bullet hole from a Hun machine gun had left a path through the centre of it, and only the fact that it was an inch too high, would have seriously interfered, and quite possibly delayed the formation of the Lethbridge Aircraft Co. some years later. However, I very foolishly loaned this helmet to some of our passengers whom the other helmet would not fit. One passenger noticed the holes and enquired the reason, and my partner, Palmer, then told the story of the helmet. It was passed around and examined with much interest. Later on, when I went to locate it, the helmet had disappeared. Naturally, I was very much peeved as the helmet was of no use to any one but an airman, and also the fact that I would not have taken any money for it, on account of the story and sentiment attached to it.

Now Airmen are, as a rule, more or less superstitious, especially so in connection with the loss of any of their personal flying clothing, as not only them, but many soldiers, officers, etc., used to carry lucky canes, charms and many other things that, they were of the opinion, brought them luck. The same was true of my helmet, and when we decided that some one had stolen it, I told Palmer to "watch out and be very careful as we are now due for a spell of tough luck."

About eight o'clock in the evening we noticed that it was beginning to cloud up and look like rain. As we hadn't any shelter there we decided to jump off and try and make Lethbridge. We figured that by doing a cross country flight, we could land at Lethbridge shortly after dark, and as we knew every foot of our own airdrome, that we would be able to make the landing without lights on the home field.

After taking off and flying steadily for half an hour it began to thunder and lightning and finally to rain in a heavy downpour. Being caught in a thunderstorm while flying is not a very comfortable experience. The bursts of thunder almost shatter your ear drums and the rain drops hit your face and arms with the velocity of cobblestones thrown at

you. We tried to climb above the storm but realized with night coming on, we might easily get lost after we got above the clouds and decided to land. We came down to within five hundred feet of the ground and picked up a small settlement a few miles back. We made for this and on circling over the houses, locating our field, the noise of the engine brought every one out, and as we finally swooped down to a field in the centre of the village, everyone, regardless of the storm, men, women, children, dogs, even some horses and a cow or two, came over to investigate the strange visitors that the storm had apparently brought in. We landed in a small sea of mud and water and one wheel struck a rock and burst an inner tube. We unloaded ourselves and our ropes for securing the plane, and wallowed around in the mud to ascertain the damage to the wheel. I noticed the vanguard of people coming up on the run, I spoke to my partner and said, "For heaven's sake, Jack, look at the mob coming, we must have scared the dickens out of every one." Palmer looked ruefully at himself and me and said, "Wait until they see us, they will think we're something the cat has dragged in." We both burst out laughing at our bedraggled appearance. We were soaking wet and covered with mud, the rain running down our faces and necks right into our boots. Helmets, goggles and coats were just one sticky, pulpy mass and the old plane had a one-sided dejected droop owing to the flat tire.

We found out that the name of the village was Glenwoodville, fifty miles from Lethbridge, about eighteen from Cardston and thirty miles from Pincher Creek. It was a veritable no man's land, not even telephone communication with the outside towns then, and only a stage mail delivery twice a week. However, the people were very hospitable, and we were given something to eat, a good clean bed for the night, and a dandy breakfast. About eight o'clock the next morning it stopped raining and about ten it had dried up considerably. A number of men gave us a hand to get the plane on dry ground, we fixed the tube, secured a contract to come back in a month's time to give a flying exhibition at a celebration they were giving and finally galloped off. The clouds were still low and at eight hundred feet we stuck old Maud's nose up into them and climbed up to three thousand feet, where we came out into a bright sunshine. No sign of earth was visible and the change from dull grey skies to clear, bright blue was great. We flew by dead reckoning as we did not have a compass on the machine. After flying for forty-five minutes exactly, and following a time scale we had made before leaving, we dove down through the clouds and came out right over the coulee about two miles south of Lethbridge viaduct and pointed square for the city. A glance at one another and a grin of sheer joy over this kind of navigation made us feel wonderfully exhilarated, and in a moment or two more we were on the ground and taxing to our hangar. The next day we were out again, and for the next six weeks the luck of the helmet followed us, and hitting us one awful wallop in the pocket-book on our very next engagement, which is described later in our flight to Verdigris Coulee.

AT VERDIGRIS COULEE

The next day after returning from Waterton Lakes we had a flying contract with a farmers' picnic at a place about one hundred miles away, called Verdigris Coulee, eighteen miles from a railroad and close to the United States border. This particular spot is one of the most weird places we have ever been in. It reminds you, in a small way, of a certain spot in Yellowstone National Park, inasmuch as the stones and hills which are of a peculiar formation of sandstone are worn and cut into odd and peculiar shapes, greatly resembling small pyramids with hats on and other distorted and queer figures. In the early days of the West this was a hide-out for bad men of all descriptions, cattle rustlers, bootleggers, and bad Indians. A few weeks before this story was written, I had the privilege of seeing one of the many well known paintings of Western scenes by Charles Russell, the cowboy artist, and in the background of the painting was a peculiar shaped hill with a flat rock on the top of it of odd design, which I identified instantly as a spot that I will remember for many years.

The farmers' picnic at Verdigris Coulee is one of the greatest events in Southern Alberta. People for hundreds of miles around gather here for an old-time western picnic, and in spite of hard times and crop failures, one of the largest gatherings which had ever attended those picnics was there.

We had some difficulty finding the place, as all the direction we had was that it was eighteen miles from Milk River town, and to follow the river until we saw a large gathering of people. As the Milk River twists and turns until it resembles a coiled rope in places, we had some job trying to explore every coulee and hollow. However, we finally located the spot and picked out a place, came down and landed. We were immediately besieged by many prospective passengers and should have had one of the largest days in our history of passenger carrying.

The day was insufferably hot, not a breath of wind in the whole valley, and while we were taking out the front control stick and disengaging the rudder controls, a noise like the explosion of a small bomb made everybody scatter, and we found that owing to the terrific heat, that our old friend the inner tube we had repaired at Glenwoodville had given up the ghost and blown out. We repaired this as quickly as possible and started in to fly with our first passenger, who was a lady school teacher of that vicinity.

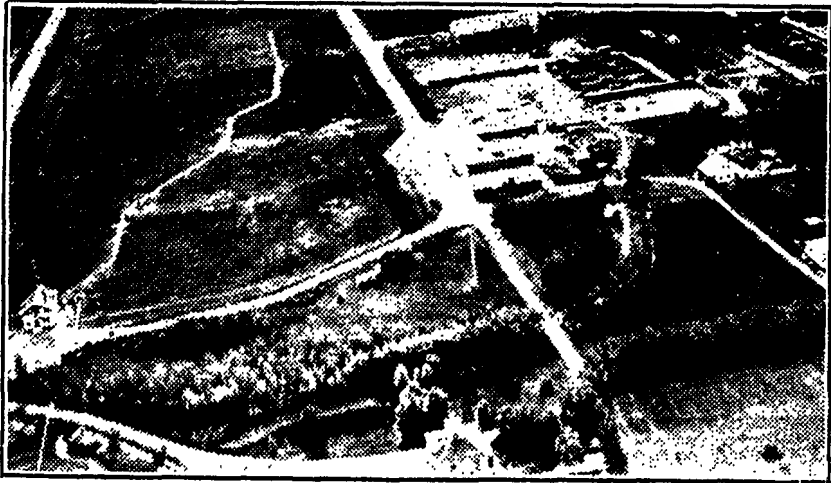
The plane took off, flew the required time and on coming down to land the wheel struck in a badger hole and broke; off went the wheel and the axle drove into the ground. At the terrific speed the plane was landing this pulled her around and broke off one wing, wiped the under-carriage off completely, broke the propellor and various rigging cables and so forth.

The lady was helped out highly elated with her flight, and was fifty yards away before some one called her attention to the fact that the plane

was a wreck. She was greatly astonished and later on I asked her if she did not feel the jar and notice the broken pieces of propellor and wheel going through the air. She said, "No," and that she expected the landings always were a little rough and for that reason she thought everything was lovely.

I made arrangements with a farmer to come after us the next day with two teams and wagons to haul the plane over to the railroad where we would ship it to Lethbridge.

Palmer and I then started in to strip the plane, taking off the wings and dissembling her for shipping. This is a long job in itself and every few minutes we would have to take after some one who was trying to collect souvenirs. In many cases we found that the souvenirs were gener-



Airgraph of the Experimental Farm, Lethbridge.

ally wrenches and other tools or vital parts of the machine and plane which could only be replaced at great expense. We were still working away when the picnic broke up and the people began to move off, and about two o'clock in the morning we laid down together under the remains of the plane and tried to sleep. As I had left Lethbridge that morning figuring on being back at night I did not even bring a coat, but was in my shirt sleeves and helmet. Nights on the prairies are usually quite cool, and needless to say we did not get much sleep. About daybreak we got up and found that we had one cigarette between the two of us. This we divided up and between puffs Palmer made the following remark: "Fitz, if we had pulled off half the adventures and grief in France that we have had with this plane we would both have about two pails of medals." I agreed, but stated that I would cheerfully trade my interest in said medals for a big fat greasy sausage, a slice of bread and one blan-

ket. Immediately after our smoke we vowed vengeance on the fellow who had stolen my helmet. As near as I can remember the jinx we put on him was something to the effect that he might never get a crop from then on, that his hens would die of the "flu," that the bullfrogs on his farm would never learn to swim for lack of water unless he returned my flying chapeau. Palmer wound up the oration with a fervent Amen.

We then decided that as it was impossible to sleep that we wander across to the river and try and find some lunch that might have been forgotten by some picnicker. We went over to where the people had sat around and great was our joy to find four buns with some kind of canned meat between. They were as hard and dry as rocks, as they had apparently been thrown away in the sun the day before. We next speared a couple of empty pop bottles and were going to fill them at the river and have a banquet. While making our way towards the river again I noticed what looked like the rear wheel of an auto some distance away and behind a clump of cotton woods. We went up to examine this and found an auto with three men in it, one was just awake and the other two asleep. We said good morning, and told him who we were. He apparently had heard of us, he was just as frank and told us that he was a bootlegger and had been selling "hooch" the day before, and that as he had not sold out until late at night decided to stay until morning. About this time one of his companions woke up and loudly demanded a snort. His friend told him that he hadn't any, but this did not appear to have any effect upon the snort requester, who got out of the car and started to search every small clump of bushes. Finally he dropped on all fours and crawled into a small bunch of shrubs until only his heels were sticking out, and later emerged with a bottle about one-quarter full. He at once put this to his mouth and lowered about half of it into him. He then ran around the car two or three times, barking and imploring us to show him a rattle snake as he wanted to bite it to take the taste of his own booze away. He then offered us the bottle but, seeing the effect it had on him, we were afraid to tackle it. This fellow was very funny and with his comical antics and remarks chased the gloom from us, and made us see the funny side of our latest predicament. He left his friend the bootlegger and attached himself to us, and later on when the farmer appeared to haul the machine in to Milk River he gave us every assistance and help. We parted with him at Milk River, and there learned that he was a well known character along the border. We loaded up our plane on a flat car and brought her to Lethbridge. This accident hit us right during our busy season when we had many fair contracts, and the direct cause of it was the inattention of a hired mechanic whom we were forced to dismiss later on. The wheel came off owing to a worn cotter pin which broke when the wheel struck the badger hole.

It was three weeks before we got the plane rebuilt with new wings, undercarriage, propellor, etc., most of the repairs having to be sent from Toronto. However, we repaired her ourselves, and since then, for the sake of economy and safety, we have always done our own rigging and mechanical work.

260 FEET OF MOVING PICTURE FILM

On one of our flights in 1920 through the mountains of the Crow's Nest Pass, we were flying to a mining town to give a stunting exhibition, consisting of the usual airplane stunts and the Locklear features which we were then doing, it was impossible for us to land and operate with passengers with safety, owing to the absence of a proper field. We had started from a town at the beginning of the foothills and to which we intended to return before landing unless compelled to do so in an emergency.

The flight through the Pass over the Frank Mountain Slide, and the beautiful panorama below of the various mining towns, and mountain peaks, struck me as very wonderful. It was the fall of the year, September 1st, to be exact, and the color effect from the ground owing to the trees changing from green to yellow, gold to brown, was particularly striking.

Our altimeter registered thirty-one hundred feet and to get a better view up the valley we pulled the plane over one of the saucer-shaped hills, the top of which would be about three hundred feet below us. My attention was called by Palmer, who pointed to the ground, and I could see dozens of forms jumping and apparently quite frantic from the noise of the engine and the shadow of the plane on the ground. At first I thought they were horses or cattle, but they moved so quickly and so gracefully that I now realized they were deer. We turned the machine around and around until they eventually disappeared badly frightened. I decided then and there that I would get a motion picture of that country, as I felt sure that it would be saleable and enjoyed in the eastern part of the world.

I spent the following winter in endeavoring to obtain a motion picture camera and in trying to interest many people in photographing the mountains and other scenes throughout the country.

In the spring I signed a contract with the Motion Pictures Ltd., of Calgary, to supply a plane, they to supply the camera and through their connection with the picture industry to market the film.

The first picture to be taken was to be the Crow's Nest Pass over the route I have mentioned, afterwards the Guy Weadick Ranch, Prince of Wales Ranch, Waterton Lakes, the Mormon Temple at Cardston, and many others.

On May 24th, 1921, we appeared at Cowley for a flying exhibition and the camera and an operator were to be sent down from Calgary to join us on the 25th. The party appeared, but stated as it was a dull and windy day that he did not think that the light would be good enough. We passed a quiet day hanging around town, which is the head of the Doukhobor colony.

The next day turned out cold, dull and windy, and again our friend decided that the light was not right. I insisted that as we were under

great expense that he let me take the camera and operate it, as he had never been up in a plane and we wished the pictures to be a success. He stated that as he was responsible for the camera that if the machine came down it might be broken. (This was good, as no reference was made to one perfectly good pilot, a five thousand dollar airplane, not to speak of his own precious self.)

However, my partner and myself held a consultation of war that evening and decided that light or no light Mr. Picture Man was going up in the machine to get those pictures if we had to gag, rope and tie him in. The plane was already fueled and oiled, the camera securely bolted on and charged with film and at daylight we woke Mr. Man up and told him to make haste as we would get the pictures by the first light and before the wind got up. It was frightfully cold out and had every appearance of snow in the mountains.

The light was the only thing that was worrying us. After all our planning we wanted the film to be a success and we waited some time, until finally Old Sol popped his head out and smiled. We jammed Mr. Camera Man into the plane. On account of the board across the cock pit to which the camera was bolted, he could not sit down nor stand up, only crouch. I swung the propellor and as my partner taxied away for the take off, I looked at our friend. He was white to the gills and shouted something about the light and pointed to the sun. Palmer grinned at me, and away he went up into the blue.

The next hour was without doubt the longest I ever put in. The planning of a whole winter, the long delay waiting on the weather conditions, the fear that on account of the greenness of the camera man that he would not be able to get his pictures, that the light might fail at the last minute, that the whole thing would be a failure, in fact I imagined a thousand things and for the first time in my life my nerves went to pieces. Fear for my partner, the machine, everything in fact worried me. I looked up into the sky, figuring that they should soon show up on the return flight. I looked at my watch a thousand times, walked around the town, back to the field, and after one hour had gone by I was just about to go to the telephone office to call up the Pass towns to see if I could locate any one who had seen the plane come down, when I heard the finest music to me in the world, the loud, steady, rhythmic roar of a perfectly tuned airplane engine, and high up in the sky my partner and machine came into view. The nose of the plane came down and in a graceful long dive and turn my good old chum in crime came in and made a perfect landing. I ran over and helped them out, they were both almost frozen. I had to rub Palmer's and our cameraman's hands to get the circulation back in them. We then joined hands and did a little dance the three of us on the field. Some "bohunks" who were watching us from the fence must have thought we had gone crazy.

Palmer told me afterwards that when he got up into the mountains that the sun went away for a while, and that he had just about given up hope when out old Hughie came again, and everytime he wanted our

camera friend, who was crouching in the cock pit, "to shoot" at something particularly interesting, he would glare at him and point to the camera, making a sign to crank. If he did not respond instantly Jock would throw old Maud around in the air, and after repeated performances like that, the poor devil figured apparently, that as he was going to be killed anyway, he might as well get the picture first. However, he shot all his film and turned out to be a fine fellow, and one of our best friends, after we got acquainted and he got used to the air.

After breakfast Palmer and I jumped off for Lethbridge and left our friend to follow by train with the camera and the film. You would think that our troubles with that picture were over, but listen now to the sequel.

After some six weeks or so had gone by we had not received any money for this picture, and consequently did not like to go to the expense of taking further scenes until we were sure they were saleable and a success. Finally we wrote our Calgary concern and they wrote the Specialty Film Company of Montreal, to whom the negative had been sent. A tracer was then put on the film and I quote from their letter, a copy of which was sent me and which is now on file.

Under date of July 29th, over three months after taking, they sent the story in detail of the lost film. Here it is: "Our broker was given this film shortly after it was received from you to ship to New York—duty prepaid. The day after he received it he was struck by a motor fire engine and is still in hospital suffering with concussion of the brain. As his assistant did not know anything about this shipment and as we thought it had already been sent and were in constant communication with Pathe News of New York, and not getting a reply we imagined they had the negative all the time. We received a wire from them saying they had not received it, and we immediately put a tracer on it and discovered it to be still in the broker's office." And so on with further explanations.

However, on August the 29th, we finally received our share of money for the picture, and the event was closed. As it was so late then in the fall that we were only able to take one more picture we decided that we could not carry out our original programme until next season, but we have this to point back to, that we are the originators of motion picture photos from an airplane in Western Canada; that they are saleable, and for that reason a success financially; also that we put across our idea, and were able to bring real photos of the Rocky Mountains to thousands of people sitting comfortably in theatre seats all over the world who, I feel sure, have not the slightest idea of the effort, perseverance and hazard it took to get them. Personally I have never seen these pictures, but a number of people who have, and one in particular who saw them in Toronto, assured me they were greatly appreciated and commented on.

WEIGHT CARRYING

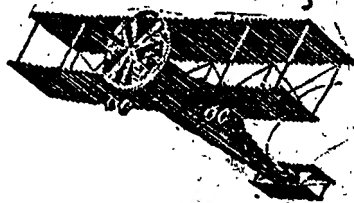
I have found by experience that women take to flying more naturally than men. At least, we have carried equally as many women, if not more than we have men, and on their first flights they appear to have more nerve. This remark I make believing that men will object to it, but nevertheless we have found it to be a fact. A woman is a mighty hard proposition to scare, believe me.

At a town south east of Iethbridge, near the border, we landed, and of the fifteen passengers we carried only one was a man. The strange thing about the whole proceeding was, that each woman passenger was heavier than the last, and as I had sold all the tickets among the crowd, I did not notice this fact until they appeared as their names were called in order for their flights.

The day was very hot and the air did not have any body or lift to it and consequently as the passengers kept on getting heavier, the plane showed great reluctance to get off the ground and fly at any great height. We were getting slightly worried, and would have stopped, only we felt that if we tried to explain the reason for our stopping that they would lose confidence and would not fly in the evening. The field was a mile square and absolutely level and we decided to carry on, and the name of the next passenger was announced, and inwardly praying that it would be a light one, imagine our horror when out stepped a graceful young gazelle weighing three hundred pounds if she weighed an ounce. I stole a look at the face of Palmer, who was piloting. Big gobs of sweat stood out on his brow, and he shot an appealing look at me to do something. I would have gladly given the woman back her money, and ten dollars beside, if she would have only gone away and hired a dray; but what could I do? If I refused to let her go, there would have been an argument, possibly a fight, others would have refused to go up, and thus, "The day would have been completely spoiled." She came over towards me, and with a voice like a fog-horn said, "How do I get into this contraption, young man?" The opportunity of refusing her was lost. Remembering the old proverb, "Hell hath no fury like that of woman scorned," I feebly pointed toward the seat and bent my knee for her to step on, so that she could get into the plane. Then began a struggle, all on my part, to keep that woman from forcing me through the wing and into the ground, as I held her up while she waved at all her friends. I wobbled and perspired freely, but finally with a superhuman effort, I boosted her up and into the seat, which was not nearly big enough. She then loudly demanded her parcel which some one was holding for her. I advised her not to take it, but to leave it until she came down. Not with her, though. She stated that the party might be gone when she came down, and wanted her parcel at once, and I gave it to her. It was shaped and felt like a bottle, and I imagined that she had just shortly before cashed in on a prescription. During all this time I did not once look at Palmer who I knew was ready to mutiny. He told me

after that if I had come near him he would have hit me over the head with a wrench because I did not prevent Sappho from going up.

I swung the propellor and then watched the old bus do her "dog-gonest" to get off the ground. She ran for half a mile and eventually staggered into the air. As soon as the wheels were clear I expected to see the passengers come right through the bottom and back to earth, but no such thing happened. That good old plane of ours gallantly decided to make the best of a bad job, and struggled gamely around the field. They never got over fifty feet up at the highest. I made no effort to sell any more flights and sent a boy up town to get some bottles of coca cola, and be sure they were cold. Finally my partner and his passenger came back to earth. He taxied up to me, glared, wiped the moisture off his face, and said: "For heaven's sake, look inside and see what's the matter with this engine, I wouldn't get no height and I am flooded out here, the gas tank is leaking or the carburetor or the gasoline feed pipe or something, and that woman weighs a ton." I looked down the rear cockpit, and sure enough a young flood was coming down from the direction of the passenger's seat. I went to the engine, scowling, opened the door, looked over everything carefully, came back to Palmer, stood at attention, saluted and reported solemnly, that the gas was not leaking but apparently the passenger was; and on getting up to help her out I found that she had dropped her parcel which had struck the metal on the front rudder bar and broken. It was a bottle of vinegar that was causing the deluge. The lady was shouting out to her admiring friends how delightful flying was and every once in a while she would make an attempt to rise. It was no use, she was wedded to that seat as much as if she had been poured into it. I secured the assistance of a couple of spectators and we finally were able to pry her out. I thought at one time that we would have to saw the plane away from her. She went away highly delighted with the flight, which she was explaining to her friends in detail. We knocked off work for a while and partook of our coca cola. The balance of the afternoon we picked and chose very carefully our passengers, particularly so during the heat of the day, and we were kept busy until dark as the result of that particular flight which was indeed a lark and much enjoyed by the spectators.



A WAR STORY WITH A PEACE-TIME FINISH

It was not my intention to relate any war time experiences in these commercial experiences with the exception of "The Death of Major Jas. McCudden," but the following tale is rather a coincidence and has some connection with commercial flying and the smallness of the world after all. Quite naturally I found it a very strange happening.

In the summer of 1920; my partner and I came to Lethbridge from a number of flying exhibitions in Southern Alberta, and as the Exhibition was on at Calgary, Alberta, we had contracted some months previously to distribute certain advertising literature over the cities of Calgary and Edmonton.

We made the flight to Calgary and fulfilled that part of our contract. O. L. Locklear, the airman, who made the change of planes in mid-air was appearing there and at Edmonton, and one of his pilots agreed to save us the long flight north from Calgary as they were going to fly there anyway, and he agreed to drop our literature over Edmonton for us.

We landed and housed our machine on Capt. Fred McCall's airdrome at Calgary, and stayed over night. McCall was engaged in the same business as we were, passenger flying and stunting exhibitions. Every one in Canada has heard, I feel sure, of his wonderful war record of forty-five Hun planes, and of his many decorations for his fighting ability.

I never knew McCall personally in France, and only met him after we were engaged in our present business, consequently all the airmen present sat around in his hangar and had a regular old-time visit and many old-time war experiences were re-told; among which was one told by myself of a certain bomb raid in France in 1918 in which I was one of the participants. The story is as follows:

On many of our air raids we would receive orders to pick up a scout escort over a spot called Aveluy Wood or at that time (what had once been Aveluy Wood); but which from the air was still a fairly good landmark. The planes we were using at the time were what was known as R.E. eights, and loaded down with six twenty-pound copper bombs, two wireless sets, two machine guns, ammunition, message bags, pistols and cartridges, etc., not to mention a pilot and observer. Consequently these planes were fairly well loaded and would stagger along over the lines at a height of from twenty-five hundred to six and seven thousand feet, and at a speed of sixty-five to seventy miles an hour, which is slow for a war service plane; consequently our need of the fast little scouts as escorts, to keep the Hun machines away, thus enabling us to reach our objective.

We had been detailed to pick up a certain squadron day after day, flying the famous S.E. 5 plane, and when these speedy little single seaters sat over us at thirteen thousand feet or so it always gave our fellows great confidence; but unfortunately for us, just about the time we were

congratulating yourself upon the strength of our convoy they would disappear behind clouds, hiding in the sun or by making out to be on a different detail, thus trying to get the Hun to attack us, or in other words, use the slow flying two-seater as bait. Naturally this did not greatly appeal to us, but on this occasion we made our objective, dropped our pills, and when returning towards our lines we were attacked by a bunch of "Heinies." Our escort was nowhere in sight when the scrap started, but in a very few moments our friends dove down out of the clouds where they had been hiding, having apparently been keeping a close eye over us and had seen the Huns long before we did.

The "Heinies" were taken completely by surprise at our re-inforcements and then what is known as a lively little dog fight ensued, planes dart across in front, turn, dive, zoom and in the general mele it is hard to tell friend from foe. However, you shoot at everything that comes in your line of sight, as every one is doing the same and quite often the damage done in some of these dog fights is small owing to the mix-up.

Our squadron leader then pulled off to one side and our other two seaters followed him, leaving the escort and Huns to it. A short time before this a "Heinie" flying a weird-colored plane had pulled out of the scrap and figured out a little offensive of his own. He would dive straight into the centre of things, firing like the mischief, go right on through and come around again. He had pulled this little trick off twice when I observed one of our scouts break off the fight, go around from the opposite side, follow the Hun on through and put burst after burst into him and sending him down on fire. The fight then took on a different angle and in a very few minutes our escort literally mopped them up and sent every one of the Germans out of the sky.

I had told this story to the bunch of fellows sitting around and noticed McCall getting interested and greatly excited, apparently on different occasions to interrupt the tale and upon the conclusion of it, he inquired the number of my squadron in France, then filled in a number of details which I had omitted, described our machines and number accurately, the number of Huns and types of their machine, the place where the fight started and proved conclusively that he was present at the scrap and very much so. McCall was the squadron leader of our escort and the fellow who had shot down the odd colored Hun, and also fattened his batting average by one or two more in that scrap, which had taken place several thousand miles away; and we met for the first time (though we had both been participants in it) on his airdrome in Calgary, and both engaged in Civil Aviation far from the ambitious Huns. We sure had a great visit and some time later both our plans were wheeled out and he departed for a town some hundreds of miles away where he was due in the morning for a stunting exhibition, while I galloped off for Conrad, Montana, three hundred and fifty miles south, upon the same errand—July 5th, 1920, and almost two years to a few days from the time of that memorable little scrap.

THE LETHBRIDGE HERALD